DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 422 HE 013 945

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TITLE The Need for Social Change Relative to Professional Women's Perceptions of Their Role-Loads, Feelings of Being Overworked and Marital and Parental Status.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Los Angeles, CA, April 13-17, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Rearing; *Faculty Workload; *Family Life; Family Relationship; Higher Education; Home Management; Job Satisfaction; *Marital Status; *Mothers; Parent Role; Peer Influence; Quality of Life; *Role Conflict; Role Perception; Spouses; *Women Faculty

ABSTRACT

The perceptions of a group of university faculty women about their work loads were studied. Respondents were asked about their responsibilities at home, about the time they spend on their professions, their households, and their families. They were also asked to judge whether and to what extent they feel overworked and about their attitudes toward different aspects of a working woman's life (e.g., can she be a good wife, a good mother, and feminine?). Respondents were 151 women on the faculty of a large midwestern university in 1977-78. Participants were divided into four groups according to their marital and motherhood status. Although all subjects reported working many hours (mean response was 51.7 hours per week), they did not report feeling particularly overworked. Those who had children and reported working (career and home responsibilities) over 100 hours per week felt no more overloaded than did the childless ones who reported working about 72 hours a week. All the subjects strongly agreed that women can be feminine and professionally successful and that professional women can have happy marriages. It is suggested that the findings indicating that mothers do their share of the child care and need less help with child care might explain why they have such a positive opinion and feel that they are as good mothers as nonworking mothers. All subjects disagreed with the statement saying that being overworked is inevitable for a working woman who has a family. However, the mothers disagreed more strongly than did the married and childless. All subjects felt that their careers are as integral a part of their "subjective reality" as are their children/husbands. The concepts of a "secondary socialization" and multiple reference groups are considered in order to possibly explain the findings. Although the data are subjective, they suggest the possibility that professional women who choose to have families carry a heavy burden, even though they do not admit it. A bibliography is included. (SW)

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The Need for Social Change Relative to Professional Women's Perceptions of their Role-Loads, Feelings of Being Overworked and Marital and Parental Status

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, California, April, 1981.

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THE NEED FOR SOCIAL CHANGE RELATIVE TO
PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE-LOADS,
FEELINGS OF BEING OVERWORKED AND MARTIAL AND PARENTAL STATUS

In recent years, with the acceleration in the rate of women entering professions significant knowledge has been accumulated concerning dual-career families. A major concern many researchers of dual-career families and professional women share is the considerable role strain and simple lack of time these people experience. Many studies report severe role overload problems for both spouses (St. John Parsons 1978) and that wives in dual-career families bear a disproportionate share of the burden of housework and childcare (Bryson, Bryson & Johnson 178, Weingarten 1978, Hall 1972, Pleck 1978). In these studies it is not always clear whether a) the subjects themselves reported that they feel overworked, or b) the researchers feel that overwork is a consequence of their subjects' lifestyle. This paper tries to help clarify this overwork issue by separating the two notions.

The findings of this study offer a new dimension for understanding women's performance in academia, which takes into consideration not only their career but also other aspects of their lives, and explains their lifestyle according to the theory of primary and secondary socialization.

This author is grateful to Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Rosenbaum for thier contributions and assistance during various stages of this research and preparation of the manuscript.

The Study

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the perceptions of a group of university faculty women about their work loads. Subjects were asked about their responsibilities at home, about the time they spend on their professions, their households, and their families. They were also asked to judge whether and to what degree they feel overworked and about their attitudes toward different aspects of a working woman's life; e.g., can she be a good wife, a good mother and feminine?

Subjects for the study were 151 women on the faculty of a large Midwestern University in 1977-1978. These subjects responded to a questionnaire mailed to all female faculty identified by the University's Program on Women (239). The response rate was thus 63 per cent.

The sample included women academicians in the following main areas: humanisty social sciences (54); basic sciences (12); physicians with academic ranks working in hospitals affiliated with the university (36); and 19 women in therapeutic fields i.e., occupational therapy. The subjects' rank distribution is the following: 44 instructors, 19 associates in medicine, 55 assistant professors, 20 associate professors and 13 professors.

Results and Discussion

Ninety-six of the women said that they were married, and 11 said that they were involved in a relationship with a man comparable to marriage. For the purpose of this study, those 11 were placed in the married category; thus 71 percent of the respondents can be considered married. The 44 women (29 per cent) who reported being single, separated

divorced, or widowed will be considered unmarried. Sixty of the women (39 per cent) reported that children were members of their current households. Four of these mothers are from the unmarried group (i.e., divorced or widowed with children).

The subjects were asked how many hours per week they devote to their professions. The mean response was 51.74. The first column in Table 1 presents the mean responses within marital and household categories. (Total number of subjects in this table is 148, rather than 151, due to incomplete answers to the questionnaire from three subjects.)

The fact that married women with children at home reported spending at least five hours a week less on their professional work than did women in any of the other categories may be due to their greater responsibilities at home. By the same reasoning, of course, unmarried women with children at home should also have reported spending fewer hours a week on professional work. They did not. However, because the number of unmarried women with children is too small to yield a dependable mean (only four subjects in this group) this fact cannot be interpreted. Married women without children reported spending the greatest number of hours per week on their career.

The resemblance of our findings to Centra's (1975) survey of 3,658 people who earned Ph.D.'s in 1950, 1960 and 1968, is striking even though he did not report separately the hours of married women with children from those who are childless. Centra found that married women, both with children and without, spend an average of 49 hours per week on professional work (we found 51.9) and that single women spend 3 hours more, 52 hours per week (we found 53.49).

Insert Table 1 about here

Subjects were also asked how much time per week they spend on domestic work (house work and childcare). The mean response was 35.87 hours. When this is added to the time spent on professional work, the total is 85.61. Women faculty respondents thus reported, on the average, that they work the equivalent in hours of two fulltime jobs. The second and third columns in Table 1 present the data within marital and household categories. Among the women without children at home, the unmarried subjects spent an average of five hours more a week on domestic work than the married ones. Perhaps the intuitive explanation is correct -- husbands help; i.e., married women may be able to spend less time on housework and more time on career because husbands share some of the domestic burden.

For women with children at home, one message is abundantly clear: having kids is a lot of work. Married women with children reported working the equivalent in hours of almost <u>three</u> fulltime jobs, over 100 hours per week. Again, the number of unmarried women with children is too small to make inferences worthwhile.

The women were asked, "How often do you feel overloaded or overworked because of your job and other responsibilities?" Answers were to be marked on the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
seldom (once a month or less)		(once a week)		regularly (almost every day)

For the whole sample, the mean response was 3.0. Considering that these are women who, by their own estimation, worked an average of more than

87 hours a week, this response seems low. We would at least expect scores on this item to reflect, in a relative way, the hours of work reported: that is, women who reported that they work more hours should also have felt more overworked. Surprisingly, this is not consistently so (see Table 2). Married women with children, by their own report working well over 100 hours a week, felt no more overloaded than did married women without children, who reported working about 72 hours a week.

Insert Table 2 about here

One possible explanation may be that mothers do not perceive time they devote to childcare as work. Perhaps mothers view childcare not as work but as something they want to do and enjoy. Contemporary research (Berhide in progress) found that some childcare activities are seen by women as leisure, some as work, and some as a combination of the two. This study does not have such detailed information, however, if the hours devoted to childcare are subtracted, mean total work hours per week for married mothers is 72.88, very similar to the means for other groups in the sample. It is no surprise, then, that their subjective perception of their overload is not greater than the other groups in the sample. Indirect support for the interpretation that childcare might not be perceived as work comes from the following results. Women were asked to rate their own perceptions of their fulfilled share in housework and childcare on a 5-point scale. While 11% of the mothers reported that they do less than their share of housework, only 3% (two mothers) reported that they do less than their share of childcare. Similarly, while 46% of the mothers felt that they need more help with housework,

only 5% (three cases) felt that they need more help with childcare. It seems likely that mothers feel they do less than their share of and need more help with things they enjoy less, feel easily replaceable and thus have lower priority--i.e., housework; and they do their share and need less help with things they enjoy more, feel less easily replaceable and have higher priority--i.e., childcare.

Another possible explanation for the phenomenon that overload scores do not reflect hours of work reported may be offered here by using the concepts secondary socialization and unsuccessful socialization (Berger & Luckman 1967) and reference group (Shibutani 1955). Socialization is never total and never finished. It includes primary socialization which happens during childhood and secondary socialization, which is "the acquisition of role-specific knowledge, the role being directly or indirectly in the division of labor" Berger and Luckman 1967:138). The process of socialization takes place through identification with significant others. The significant others in the individual's life are the principal agents for the maintenance of his/her subjective reality. No transformation of subjective reality is possible without identification with significant others who are the guides into the new reality. In social evaluation theory's terms (Pettigrew 1967) these significant others can be called reference groups. Human beings learn about themselves by comparing themselves to others. A reference group is the social object with which individuals compare and evaluate themselves.

Today's professional women went through a primary socialization process according to traditional sex role stereotypes i.e., the roles of

wife and mother. However, they are also going through a secondary socialization process which includes also a professional role. It is very likely that professional women use multiple reference groups (Schmitt 1972) to evaluate themselves. Housewives are their reference group and significant others when they evaluate their traditional female role according to their primary socialization. Professional males are their reference group and significant others when they evaluate themselves according to their secondary socialization. Having asymetrical significant other worlds can lead to "unsuccessful socialization i.e. discrepancy between primary and secondary socialization" (Berger and Luckman 1967:171). Individuals try to avoid unsuccessful socialization and use the option "individualism" which is directly linked to the possibility of unsuccessful socialization. The individualist emerges as a specific social type who has the potential to migrate between a number of available worlds and who has deliberately and awarely constructed a self out of the material provided by a number of available identities (Berger and Luckman 1967:171). The professional women use the option of individualism by migrating the material provided by their mother-wife identity and by their professional identity. They achieve this subjective reality by taking for granted that having chosen the dual rewards of career and family means having very little time for themselves and that they ought to be able to accept the dual burdens without complaints. Their ideals about their subjective reality, i.e. combining career and family, are such that to admit that they are overburdened would be an admission of failure or inadequacy, since it means that they are not able to integrate the demands of the two worlds.

Supports for this interpretation come from two sources: 1) answers on a 4-point scale about different aspects of working women's lives, and 2) open-ended questions.

The women were asked to express their opinions on different aspects of working women's lives on a scale from one to four, with four representing the most positive response.

Insert Table 3 about here

Table 3 presents the data: all subjects strongly agree that women can be feminine and professionally successful. There were no significant differences among the groups on this item. All subjects also strongly agree that professional women can have happy marriages. The group of married and childless women scored on this item significantly higher than all three other groups at the .05 level.

It is interesting to note that on the statement about working women being good mothers, the mothers scored significantly higher than the other two groups of nonmothers at the .05 level. This result indicated that mothers set for themselves higher demands and norms regarding motherhood than the other groups. The findings about mothers doing their share of and needing less help with childcare, might explain why they have such a positive opinion and feel that they are as good mothers as nonworking mothers.

All subjects disagreed with the statement saying that being overworked is inevitable for a working woman who has a family. However, the mothers disagreed stronger than the married and childless. A t-test indicated that the difference between the two groups was significant at

the .05 level. The unmarried mothers disagreement score with this statement was even stronger; however, the number of subjects in this group is too small (only four subjects) to yield a dependable mean and their score cannot be interpreted.

Analysis of the open-ended questions reveals that all subjects feel that their career is an integral part of their subjective reality as their children/husbands. Subject 116, a 27-year-old biologist, says "my career seems to be an important, integral part of my personality." Subject 99, a 56-year-old married mother, says "I have worked all my adult life before and after marriage and take it for granted." Subject 69, 27 years old, married and childless, says "My career is part of my ego, part of our relationship - can't separate or sort it out." Subject 87, a 42-year-old surgeon who has two children, feels that she is "a conscientious working woman who tries to give as much time as possible to her children, her husband and tries to keep her house decent...she is tired because she is trying to do the work of three people: a career woman, a mother and a wife." She, as many others, feels that "the reasons for choosing a profession need not be discussed, it is just a way of life, and if a woman cannot manage such a lifestyle and feels that she is not just tired but overworked or overloaded she should give something up." Subject 88, a 34-year old, divorced with two children, says "My advice to professional women is: this lifestyle (i.e. having a career and family) is difficult but in spite of the personal cost it is worthwhile. If you want a career and children, be prepared to work many hours, have no time for yourself or for leisure, but to have a lot of satisfaction."

Thus all subjects, but especially mothers, have very

high ideals about combining career and family. They feel that they can and/or should be able to be successful in their career, feminine, good mothers and have happy marriages, all that without feeling overloaded or overworked. Only one subject mentioned that she is tired. However, it seems as if it is OK to be tired but it is not OK to admit a feeling of being overworked or overloaded since the latter has a connotation of not being able to cope with both world's demands.

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications for the Future

Social scientists choose measurements that either ask respondents to assess their work-time and feeling of overwork, or rate respondents overwork according to notions the researcher has. The strategies used depend upon the purpose of the research. In this study the respondent's assessment of their experience was of critical value.

It should be emphasized that all our variables were measured by self-report. We do not know, for example, that married women with children at home in fact worked an average of 108 hours a week. But this consideration, if anything, makes our findings even more perplexing. Although our sample of professional women reported working many hours per week, they did not report feeling particularly overworked; and within our sample, women who reported that they work more did not report feeling more overworked. We have suggested some explanations for our results. But certainly, our study raised more questions than it answers.

Although the data are subjective, it suggests the disturbing possibility that professional women who choose to have families carry a very heavy burden, even though they do not admit it. The finding that

they do not adequately acknowledge it and the explanation of this finding according to "subjective reality" theory increases even more the importance of this issue. Perceiving a problem is the absolute necessary prerequisite for change. If people are not aware of and do not admit that they are overworked they will not attempt to take measures that will alleviate this pressure. It seems to be difficult, if not impossible, to function successfully and adequately under such continuous pressure. These superwomen's achievement in their career, family, or both might not hold on for a long term under such conditions. These women's pressure, although not adequately admitted, has serious implications for the family and parenting as well as for career development.

Our data reported elsewhere (Yogev and Vierra, 1979) suggest that a high proportion of professional women may be unwilling to pay the price: the rate of childlessness among married women is high and might indicate a trend toward permanent childlessness among professional women. Similarly Widom and Burke (1978) found no significant sex differences in marital status of junior faculty. However 2/3 of the married females reported having no children, whereas less than 1/3 of the married males had no children. These authors suggest an historical perspective: Fifty years ago women faculty and female professionals were not married. Today young women faculty are by and large as likely to be married as their men colleagues, but these women are now in a situation where they either substantially postpone having children or seriously consider not having children.

Another line of research suggests that the heavy burden professional

women carry seems to affect their performances in their career. Several investigators (Loeb and Febler 1973, Hartman, Morlock, Perkins and Tinsley 1976) have reported that women tend to publish less than their male colleagues, thus sustaining the stereotype of women as less competent and less involved in their careers than men (O'Leary 1974). Astin and Bayer (1979) found some evidence that having a family enhances a man's academic position as indicated by higher rank and salary, while this relationship was not true for women. Centra (1975) looked at the influence of marriage on career's contribution (as indicated by the number of publications). Men clearly outdistance women--an average of 15 publications for men to 9 for women. Marriage contributed to this discrepancy. While single women and the few single men in the sample published the same amount (an average of 10 each) married men published twice as much as married women (18 vs. 9 publications). Since Centra did not report separate results for married women with or without children, it is impossible to correlate the lower publication rate with the existence of children. However, since the majority of married women in his sample had children, our finding that married women with children spend 41.30 more hours per week on domestic work than married and childless women might offer a possible explanation for their lower rate of publication.

With increasing pressure for universities to meet Office of Economic Opportunities guidelines, more women will be in academia stimulating universities to review ways of minimizing role conflict for their female employees. Glenwick et al (1978) found that the establishment of day

care facilities and adoption of more flexible tenure policies were endorsed by female assistant professors. Revisions in maternity leave, encouragement of part-time faculty, (Furniss & Graham, 1974), and modification of nepotism policies (Bryson et al., 1976) have also been proposed. Since university career development is conceptualized on the basis of male timetables and values (Houschild, 1975), we need to re-examine these policies to make room for women to participate with more congruence between their careers and personal lives. Acknowledging the heavy burden professional women carry, particularly the ones who have children, is an absolute sequisite when these new policies are considered.

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Table 1

Mean Hours Worked Per Week

	Professional Work	Domestic Work	Total	N
Unmarried, no children	53.49	23.46	76.95	39
Married, no children	55.63	18.46	74.09	50
Unmarried, children	54.50	45.75	100.25	4
Married, children	48.55	59.76 (35.12)*	108.31	55
Missing				3
Total	51.74	35.87	87.61	151

* The number in parentheses represents hours devoted to children as part of hours devoted to domestic work.

Table 2

Perceptions of Overwork*

	Mean Overwork Rating	N
Unmarried, no children	3.10	39
Married, no children	2.94	50
Unmarried, children	3.25	4
Married, children	2.96	55
Missing		3
Total	3.00	151

* A 5-point scale was used with 5 representing the highest degree of overwork perception.

Table 3

Attitudes About Career Women

	Mean Agreement Scores*			
	Married With Children	Unmarried With Children	Married No Children	Unmarried No Children
1. A woman can be successful in a career and feminine.	3.78	3.89	3.73	3.78
2. Working women's marriages are as happy as nonworking women's	3.61	3.55	3.91	3.64
3. Working mothers can establish as warm and secure a relationship with their children as can nonworking mothers.	3.45	3.77	3.22	3.21
4. Being overworked is inevitable for a working woman who has a family.	2.05	1.55	2.29	1.93

* A 4-point scale was used with 4 representing the most positive response.